

# Vets hall-emergency center getting closer to completion

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The new Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District Hall and Red Cross emergency center is inching its way to completion.

Memorial District Board President Gary Tofanelli hopes to have the building finished in time for the annual Valley Springs Melodrama in early 2017.

However, he said a stumbling block in completing the building has been working with Pacific Gas & Electric Co. to provide power to the new hall, which will also serve as one of the county's Red Cross emergency evacuation centers.

Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District obtains its electricity at reduced rates through an association of special districts and is not a PG&E electric customer, he said. However, electricity is transmitted to the existing vets hall and the soon-to-be new vets hall through PG&E lines.

The memorial district submitted an application for service to hook up the new vets hall five months ago, Tofanelli said, and this week finally received the go-ahead from the utility company.

The contract to complete the electrical and gas hook up comes with a \$27,000 price tag payable in advance. Even that detail stalled the process as it was debated between the memorial district and PG&E whether the payment should go directly to PG&E or through the entity the district purchases its power from.

Tofanelli said he expects the check to pay PG&E will be issued this week and hopes the hook up work will be completed within the next two weeks.

Once the new hall has electricity, the district can begin testing and fine-tuning equipment such as lighting, the air and heating system, and appliances in the kitchen, he added.

There is some final work to be completed in the kitchen and volunteers are being sought to paint the interior and install carpeting as a cost-savings move, Tofanelli said.

"We decided some things could be completed by ourselves to save costs," he explained.

The district is stretched financially since it had to come up with nearly \$60,000 for PG&E and Valley Springs Public Utility District hook-up costs, he said.

Those who would like to volunteer are asked to volunteer are asked to call the district office at 772-9650 to get the dates and times of the work parties.

Another obstacle in completion has been the county's drainage system requirements. The district was required to pump runoff water from the hall up to the district's park. Related excavation work has slowed down because they are encountering a lot of rock.

While the melodrama could be one of the first productions in the new hall, Tofanelli is also looking forward to having a gala grand opening celebration when the work is completed.

The new vets hall is nearly three times larger than the existing building. In addition to the commercial-grade kitchen, the hall will have multiple meeting rooms, larger stage area for theatrical events, along with a larger capacity for community and private events. The modern building also solves handicap-access, heating and air-conditioning issues associated with the 50-plus-year-old existing hall.